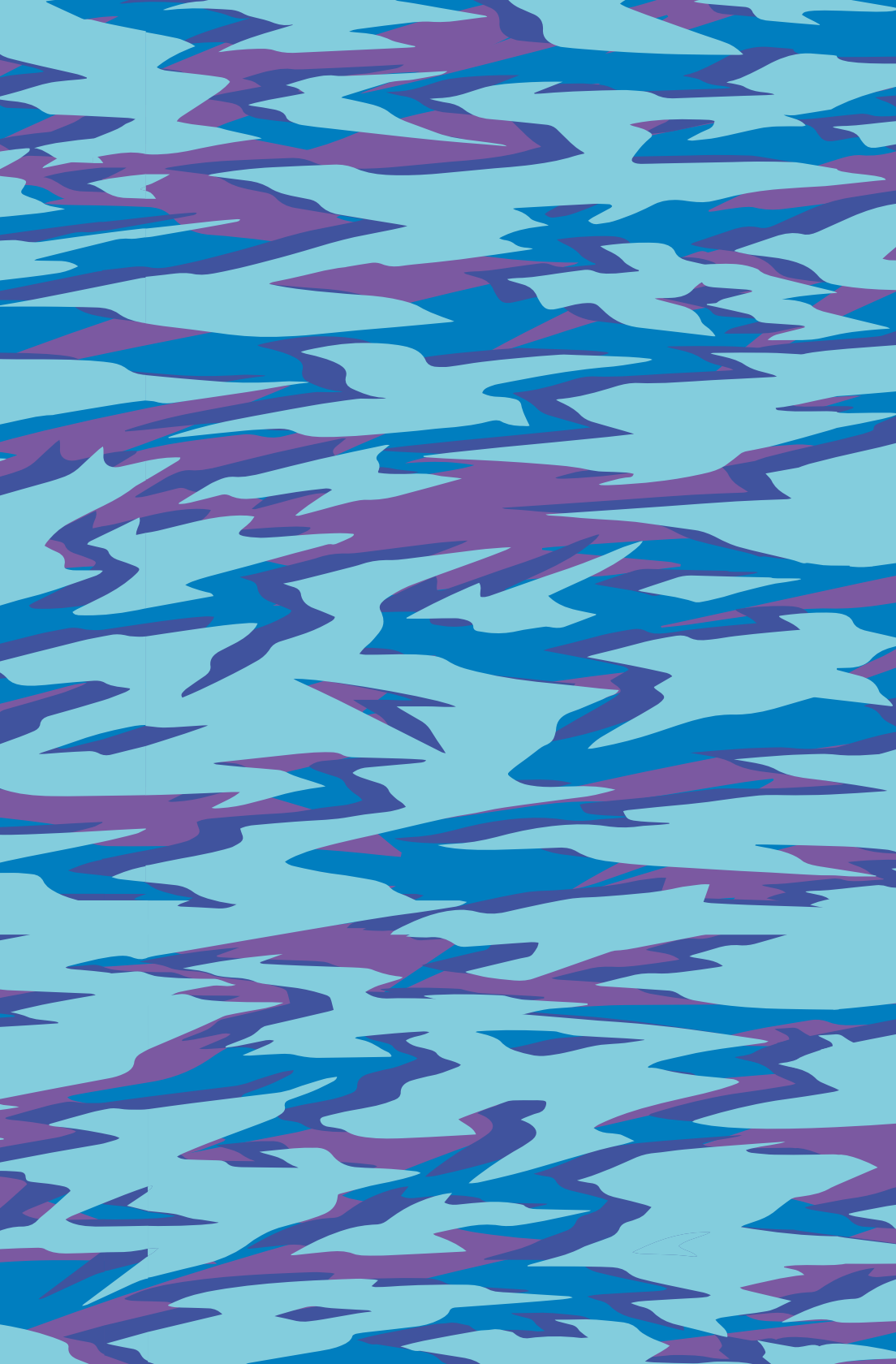




# La Reina de Los Ángeles

Sturt Haaga Gallery  
September 17, 2018 —  
January 13, 2019



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September 17, 2018 —  
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**Featuring:**

Judith F. Baca

Andrew Bird

Lauren Bon and the  
Metabolic Studio

Tom Carroll  
(Tom Explores Los Angeles)

Carolina Caycedo

Mercedes Dorame

Nicholas Hummingbird

Galia Linn

Blue McRight

Diego Palacios

Michael Parker

Emma Robbins

Kerry Tribe

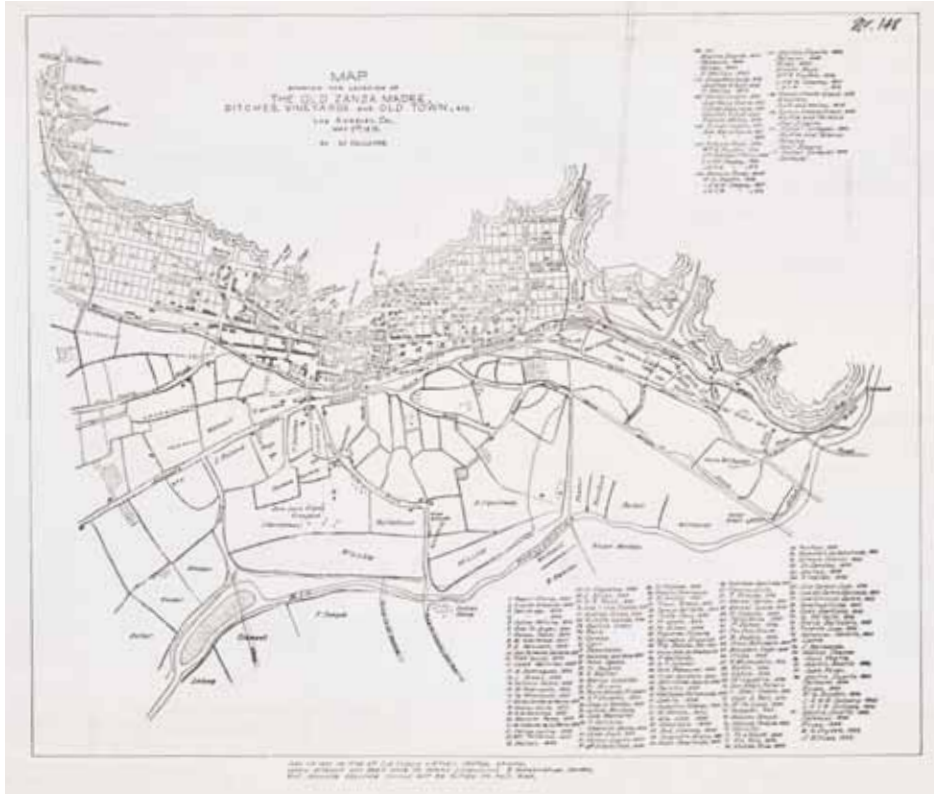
Devon Tsuno

**Curated by**

Debra Scacco

Cover image:  
Los Angeles River,  
Verdugo Wash. Photo  
© Debra Scacco.

Left: Devon Tsuno.  
*Los Angeles River  
Watershed Pattern*,  
2016.



## Introduction

Text by Debra Scacco.

Without the Los Angeles River, there would quite simply be no Los Angeles. On arrival in 1769, the Spanish deemed her *El Río de Nuestra Señora La Reina de Los Ángeles de Porciúncula* (The River of Our Lady Queen of the Angels of Porciúncula). For thousands of years prior, this same stretch of water had been a vital source of life and community for the Tongva people.

The life of the Los Angeles River has been wild and unpredictable. While the precise geography is unknown, historians have estimated a change in course at least nine times in the first half of the 19th century alone. Once meeting the Pacific at

Santa Monica Bay, the flood of 1825 rerouted the river dramatically, carving a course similar to present day, joining the Pacific Ocean from Long Beach. While a natural change in course over time is somewhat expected, the severity of the shift was exacerbated by the rapid infrastructure and development of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Homes and businesses were built on floodplains, resulting in devastating loss. Trees were cleared and shrubs removed for cultivation and grazing, exposing obstacle-free paths for the flood waters to move rapidly. New irrigation canals weakened river banks. And, most significantly, the arrival of the railroads required a new kind of infrastructure: the trestle bridge. The installation of tightly spaced bridge supports in riverbeds inadvertently acted as dams during heavy rains, blocking the flow of debris and thereby building enough force for water to violently break through at high speeds. When imagining a burgeoning Los Angeles in 1825, one may envision the scale of devastation caused by a sudden 20-mile southeast shift in the river's course. And still, rapid development occurred in the following decades. The devastation of the flood of 1914 led to flood control measures; with the flood of 1938 spurring the concrete 51-mile stretch we have come to know as the Los Angeles River.

Less than 250 years into the life of our young city, a complex infrastructure delivers water not

just to our citizens, but to crops, farms and manicured lawns. We have quite literally cemented the natural flow, creating systems of lines below and above ground to excavate, pump and carry water to millions. Yet in California alone, it has been estimated that nearly 1 million citizens are still without access to safe, affordable drinking water. As we face continued environmental instability as evidenced through recent historic drought and devastating wildfires, we must acknowledge that this vital resource is not endless.

We must also acknowledge that water is power. There is no settlement, no building, no industrialization, without water. We have witnessed diversion, disruption, privatization. While making immense technological and infrastructural strides, we have simultaneously altered natural ecosystems and ancient cultures beyond recognition. The severe disruption of this natural balance ultimately leads to scarcity of this vital resource.

*La Reina de Los Ángeles* presents a discussion of our present relationship with water, using the Los Angeles River as an entry point. Through contemporary artworks, documentary films, historic materials and special programming, *La Reina* explores the history, infrastructure and community around this critical resource.

Map showing the location of the old Zanja Madre, ditches, vineyards and Old Town, etc. May 7 1875.

Image © The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

## Endless Column 4

### Michael Parker

*Personal Pool #1 & #7*  
(glazed stoneware),  
gutters (glazed stoneware),  
water, electricity, steel,  
redwood, plants, fasteners,  
pump, plumbing

15 x 7 x 7 feet  
2018

Photo © Descanso Gardens.

*Endless Column* explores access to, movement and storage of water, and the ecosystems that thrive within such systems. Standing at 15 feet tall, the irrigated sculpture houses two handmade personal pools: source and return for water that flows through a series of handmade ceramic gutters. Populated by plants, the gutters act as a cleanser for the water as it travels from top to bottom, echoing the daily movement of water from Hall Beckley Canyon that gives life to Descanso Gardens. Each ceramic gutter has been formed from detritus found in Parker's studio (plastic bags, bubble wrap, cardboard), giving a subtle nod to the effects of consumer culture on our natural water systems.



## Ritual

### Galia Linn

Paper clay, crawl  
crackle and white  
glazed stoneware

6 pieces  
39 x 21 x 17 inches  
2015

Photo © the artist.

Works by Galia Linn address universal elements: water, oxygen, fire, earth. The organic clay forms are simultaneously ancient relics and contemporary guardians: objects of ritual continually reinforcing the relationship between our bodies and the earth. Placed on gallery grounds, the circular installation of six works forms a ritual dance as light dappling through the canopy of trees continually animates the vessels. While the forms suggest containment, the cracks suggest release; these elemental tensions establishing a delicate balance between the mediums' limits and Linn's ongoing exploration of material and form.



## LA River Wildflower Planters (Los Angeles River)

### Devon Tsuno

Ink-sublimated  
cordura, birch, TPF soil,  
*Sphaeralcea ambigua*

Sizes variable  
Edition of 50  
2018

Photo © the artist.

Works by Devon Tsuno draw directly from water patterns of the LA River. The planters nurture native seedlings into larger, low-water plants that could be transplanted at a later date. With an emphasis on function, the sculptures imagine an optimistic future where native flora is redistributed throughout the city, bag-by-bag, and grown with reclaimed water using the latest technology.

An avid fisher, Tsuno will host *Art and Fishing the LA River*, a talk about art and carp fishing in the river. Tsuno, with members of the California Ghetto Carp fishing Club, will discuss best catch and release practices for fly fishing and European-style carp fishing.





## Orion's Belt — Paahe' Sheshiiyot — A Map for Moving Between Worlds (detail)

—  
**Mercedes Dorame**

Cinnamon, concrete,  
abalone shell, quartz,  
found stones, metate,  
hawk feathers, red yarn,  
ochre and acrylic paint

8 x 8 x 18 feet  
2018

Installation view,  
*Made in L.A.*,  
Hammer Museum,  
Los Angeles.  
Photo © Brian Forrest.

Mercedes Dorame explores the construction of culture and origin stories as outcomes of the need to tie one's existence to the land. As a member of the Gabrielino/Tongva tribe in Los Angeles, Dorame is deeply connected to the landscape of California. Each aspect of the site-specific installation reflects an element of her heritage. Cogged stones are recreated based on artifacts found on sacred sites; cinnamon is used in lieu of ochre, a ceremonial pigment now difficult to acquire. Dorame's work is deeply rooted in her work as a cultural resource consultant, a Native person hired to identify and sometimes remove artifacts in areas of construction in their tribal territory. Dorame creates ceremony to honor the past, mixing truth and fiction to discuss personal history in relation to cultural heritage.



## Shipping and Receiving: Hazards of the Catalina Channel

—  
**Diego Palacios**

Aluminum cast and atlas  
vertebrae of humpback whale,  
headphone with sound

24 x 12 inches each  
2017/18

Photo © the artist.

Composed of a found whale vertebrae (C1), a cast of the vertebrae and an interview with a navigational hazard removal captain, *Shipping and Receiving* highlights the complicated relationship between nature and infrastructure. This 20-year-old Blue Fin whale, struck by a cargo ship in the Catalina Channel, was carried into the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach while caught in the bow of a cargo ship. When declared a navigational hazard, the whale was towed to the beach where the artist discovered its skull and vertebrae. A university autopsy concluded that the whale had a broken neck and had drowned. The animal was a victim of the complex infrastructure of the sea: a common sacrifice in the world of marine shipping.



## Yaagna Ollas

### — Lauren Bon and the Metabolic Studio

Los Angeles River clay

41 x 120 x 53 inches  
2016/18

Opposite page:  
*Yaagna Ollas*  
firing documentation  
2016

Photos © the artist.

An *olla* is a traditional means of irrigating arid lands using clay vessels partially buried in the ground. As the *olla* holds water below ground, evaporation is minimized. Water transpires slowly through the once-fired clay to support root systems of plants. Lauren Bon and the Metabolic Studio use this form as a means to reconnect site and place, and to create archeological ambiguity.

The collection on view, *Yaagna Ollas*, is the result of a three-month workshop with the Metabolic Studio team, most of whom had never before made an *olla*. Together they dug Los Angeles River clay from the source and completed the very time-intensive process of working the clay into a state conducive to making the coiled *ollas*. As in the workshops offered as a part



of this exhibition, *ollas* were fired in a pit dug in the same earth from where the clay came.

Metabolic Studio is exploring ways in which growth and irrigation can occur off-grid, absent of land ownership or water infrastructure. This work is being explored in relationship to Lauren Bon's private water right, #21342, to 106 acre-feet of water for her metabolic artwork, *Bending the River Back into the City*. In this work, Bon will divert water from the Los Angeles River to irrigate a number of state parks.

#### Community Olla Making

In conjunction with the exhibition, Metabolic Studio will host off-site public workshops in which participants will have the opportunity to make an *olla*.

As in *Yaagna Ollas*, the clay is sourced from an industrial site on a historic LA River floodplain, now an extension of Metabolic Studio and referred to as the Moon.

Following the workshops, the studio will host an open house as *ollas* made through this collective action are fired in an open pit on the Moon.

*Ollas* will become part of the community property of an emergent new Citizens' Metabolic Utility.



## Quillz II (POINTY)

### Emma Robbins

Blue Bird Flour bag,  
porcupine quills

15 x 7.75 inches  
2017

Photo © the artist.

*Quillz* is the basis of a series of works by artist and activist Emma Robbins that explores her Diné Navajo heritage, and the public perception and understanding of indigenous peoples. For *La Reina de Los Angeles*, Robbins is creating *Tseebííts áadah* (*Eighteen*), a new body of work addressing histories of forgetting, paving-over, re-routing and eradication of the river, of nature, of ancestral homelands. The series is assembled from a wide range of materials typically associated with Native culture, ranging from porcupine quills to pow wow regalia to postcards purchased on the reservation. Stereotypes, misunderstanding and history of erasure all contribute to what Robbins refers to as “the Pan-Indian experience.”

A Diné Navajo indigenous peoples’ activist, artist and educator, Robbins created this work in response to the ongoing human impact on indigenous peoples of treaties never enforced, never honored and seldom remembered.





## Serpent River Book

—  
Carolina Caycedo

Artist book,  
72-page accordion-fold,  
offset, printed canvas  
hardcover, elastic band  
Numbered edition of 250

8.75 x 12.25 x 1.25 inches  
(closed)  
2017

Photo © the artist.

*Serpent River Book* is a 72-page accordion-fold artist-book that combines archival images, maps, poems, lyrics and satellite photos, with the artist's own images and texts on river bio-cultural diversity. As a book it can be opened, pleated and read in many directions, and has a performatic potential to it, functioning as a score or as a workshop tool.

*Serpent River Book* gathers visual and written materials compiled by the artist while working in Colombian, Brazilian and Mexican communities affected by the industrialization and privatization of river systems.



## The Great Wall of Los Angeles

—  
Judith F. Baca

Paint on concrete

13 x 2754 feet  
1976

Aerial footage  
Run time: 5 minutes 27 seconds  
2017

Photo © SPARC Archives.

Spanning a half-mile stretch of the Tujunga Flood Control Channel, *The Great Wall of Los Angeles* is a landmark pictorial representation of the history of ethnic peoples of California from prehistoric times to the 1950s. Baca refers to *The Great Wall* as presenting “an alternative history that tells the true story of immigrant America.” Begun in 1974, Baca's creation of the longest mural in the world employed more than 400 at-risk youth and their families, in conjunction with artists, oral historians, ethnologists, scholars and hundreds of community members. *The Great Wall* was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2017.

## Font

### Blue McRight

Mixed media

12 x 9 x 1.25 feet  
2016

Photo © Gene Ogami.

Works by Blue McRight call to mind a surrealist mythology exploring our most urgent environmental issue: water. Large-scale installation *Font* builds a knowledge base of sorts on the topic, presenting a color-coded library of fact intermingled with fiction to feed our compulsive need for stimuli and information. Emanating from the spine of the piece are a number of antique faucets from which spawn black hoses, a visual cue for the viewer to differentiate between history and mythology, abundance and scarcity. Referencing contemporary culture, infrastructure, and archaeological artifacts, McRight creates hybrid objects that lead to more questions than answers.



## Exquisite Corpse

### Kerry Tribe

Video projection with sound,  
Run time: 51 minutes  
2016

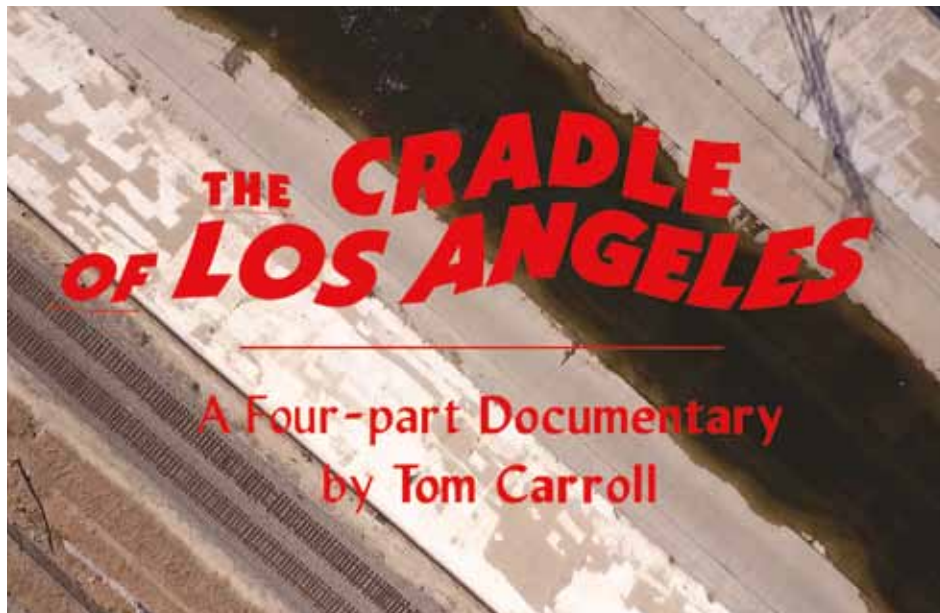
Outdoor screening  
Thursday Oct. 4, 7pm  
Main Lawn.

Installation view,  
CURRENT LA  
Sunnynook River Park.  
Photo © Panic Studio L.A. /  
City of Los Angeles,  
Department of Cultural Affairs.

*Exquisite Corpse* is a 51-minute film that traces the 51-mile LA River from its origin in the San Fernando Valley to its terminus at the Pacific Ocean. Along the way, Tribe's camera captures its varied landscapes, neighborhoods, creatures and communities through a string of meditative encounters that collectively describe the river at this juncture in its history.

Appearing as an outdoor screening on the Main Lawn, the piece allows viewers to experience the poetic drift of the film in the context of Descanso's majestic coast live oaks.





## The Cradle of Los Angeles

—  
Tom Carroll

Documentary short  
Run time: 10 minutes  
2017

Photo © the artist.

Discussing the site of Los Angeles State Historic Park, this documentary short begins in 5000 BCE with the Tongva people, then moves through Spanish and Mexican rule, and finally American control. *The Cradle of Los Angeles* traces how the location of this land (and more importantly, water) has played a key role in the continual evolution of Los Angeles.

Carroll's documentary provides a succinct overview of this important historic site where the river once flowed year-round and it served as home to the Zanja Madre, the original irrigation system that allowed the early growth of Los Angeles.



## Echolocations: River

—  
Andrew Bird

Audio installation  
Written and performed by  
Andrew Bird. Courtesy of  
Wegawam Music Co.  
Run time: 40 minutes  
2017

Photo © Tyler Manson.

Recorded under the Glendale-Hyperion bridge in Los Angeles' Atwater Village, *Echolocations: River* is the second piece in a series of short films and recordings documenting site-specific compositions. Performed by Andrew Bird in remote and acoustically interesting natural and urban environments, the first installment, *Echolocations: Canyon*, was released in 2015.

Displayed as an outdoor sound installation on the gallery's living roof, the work brings the river to the Gardens.

# La Reina de Los Ángeles

## Programming Calendar

### Documentary Screenings

Boddy House  
Free with entry.

#### *Tending the Wild*

Run time: 1 hour

This documentary shines light on the environmental knowledge of indigenous peoples across California. *Tending the Wild* is a co-production of KCETLink and the Autry Museum of the American West.

#### *Into the Future*

Run time: 36 minutes 29 seconds

Created by Southern California Edison, this 1921 silent film was produced in tandem with the building of the LA Aqueduct. Screening courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

### Events

*Chinatown* (1974)

7:30pm, Sept. 16

Main Lawn

Enjoy an outdoor screening of the 1974 film classic, starring Jack Nicholson and Faye Dunaway. Free. Advance tickets required.

*Exquisite Corpse*

(Kerry Tribe, 2016)

7pm, Oct. 4

Main Lawn

This 51-minute film by artist Kerry Tribe traces the 51-mile length of the LA River, from its origin in the San Fernando Valley to its end at the Pacific Ocean.

Members free. Nonmembers free with entry. Advance tickets required.

#### Native Plant Traditions

10am – noon, Oct. 27

Birch

Native plant expert Nicholas Hummingbird discusses native Californians' practices of conservation, botany, art and stewardship. Advance registration required. \$25 members, \$30 nonmembers.

#### Community *Olla* Making

5 – 9pm, Nov. 8, 15 and Dec. 6

Metabolic Studio

Learn to make *ollas*, traditional clay pots, at these workshops at Metabolic Studio. Advance registration required. Free.

#### Art and Fishing the LA River

Noon, Nov. 4

Boddy House

Join artist Devon Tsuno, with founding members of the California Ghetto Carping Club, as they discuss fishing in the LA River. Tickets available at [descansogardens.org](http://descansogardens.org)

# A Gallery in a Garden

The Sturt Haaga Gallery opened in 2011. It was created by repurposing, renovating and expanding Descanso Gardens founder E. Manchester Boddy's original garage, and completed a five-year renovation of the Boddy House and its surrounding landscape. Designed by the Los Angeles firm Frederick Fisher and Partners, Architects, the gallery expands upon the original structure and complements the historically protected architecture of the site.

As you peruse the work in the gallery, pay special attention to the way the design of the gallery spaces invites you to stay in visual contact with the garden that surrounds it.

Typically three exhibitions are presented each year. Through thematically unique showings, the gallery's program seeks to inspire visitors to Descanso Gardens to see nature in new ways and think about the "nature of Nature" from new perspectives. Past exhibitions have included themes that celebrate the elements to be found in the garden — light, water, wood — and delve into artists' interpretations of the nature of landscape; natural history; abstraction vs. pictorial depiction; biology; and the history of the Gardens' spaces.

By offering these shows, our hope is that visitors to both the gallery and to Descanso Gardens will, when they take their next walk, pay special attention to what they are seeing and experiencing and that, perhaps, what they've seen in the gallery will inspire them to see and think about the garden in new and unexpected ways.

The mission and programs of the Sturt Haaga Gallery are sustained by an endowment from Heather and Paul Haaga.



1418 Descanso Drive  
La Cañada Flintridge  
CA 91011  
[descansogardens.org](http://descansogardens.org)



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